

# INVENTORYING WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT:

## THE VALUES OF AMERICAN WILDERNESS

April, 2002

**A NATIONAL ASSESSMENT**—On July 11 and 12, 2000, a national workshop focusing on what we know about the values of the National Wilderness Preservation System was held in Washington, DC. At this workshop, invited national experts from the science and management communities explored the need for and approaches to assessing the values that the NWPS adds to American landscapes and quality of life. From workshop participants came conceptualization of a **Framework of Wilderness Values** and a call to inventory and communicate what we know about these values and to identify research needed to fill holes in our knowledge base.

**A FOCUS ON VALUES**—The **fundamental question** to be addressed through the ensuing assessment will be, “To what degrees and in what ways does the National Wilderness Preservation System add value in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America?” Values to be inventoried include social, economic and ecological. Across this spectrum of values, it is recognized that the NWPS contributes to the welfare of both humans and non-humans, and that benefits accrue within the boundaries of NWPS areas and to people and landscapes outside of designated Wilderness.

In the fall of 2001, scientists in Forest Service Research and with the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia began assembling a national, multi-disciplinary team of scientists that would address the above fundamental question about the values of wilderness. This team and key agency and organizational leaders will hold a national meeting in Athens Georgia on April 23-24 to finalize plans and organize the work to occur over the following 12 months. Findings from this assessment are to be reported at a national symposium and published as a book. Primary audiences for this work would be Federal Administration leaders, leadership in wilderness management agencies, the National Wilderness Policy Council, the Congress, wilderness educators, the outdoor industries, conservation organizations, the media and other national thought leaders.

**ORGANIZATION**—This national project is being coordinated by a **core team** composed of Forest Service and university scientists at the University of Georgia. A pool of financial resources has been assembled and a full time project manager has been hired. In addition to a national symposium, forums for reporting findings will include Congressional briefings, agency leadership conferences, internet web sites, and appropriate other national media. Sponsors of this assessment include the USDA Forest Service, the USDI Bureau of Land Management, the University of Georgia, The Wilderness Society, and the Pew Wilderness Center.

**PRODUCTS**—From this assessment, a number of **products** will be provided. They include:

A **national symposium** for reporting and critiquing findings from the assessment of values attributed to Wilderness

A **series of presentations** offered at forums where the intended primary audiences for this work customarily assemble

**Technical reports** to capture the science aspects of the reviews and syntheses completed for this assessment

**Popularly-written summaries** of findings from the inventories of information about wilderness values

A **report on gaps in information** about wilderness values and the research needed to fill those gaps.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**—The principal **contacts** for this proposal are:

Dr. H. Ken Cordell, Project Leader, Southern Research Station, Athens GA

(706-559-4263 or [kcordell@fs.fed.us](mailto:kcordell@fs.fed.us)) or

Dr. John Bergstrom, Professor, Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, University of Georgia, Athens, GA (706-54200749 or [jbergstrom@agecon.uga.edu](mailto:jbergstrom@agecon.uga.edu))